United Nations E/CN.5/2011/NGO/11

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
1 December 2010

Original: English

Commission for Social Development
Forty-ninth session
9-18 February 2011
Item 3 (a) of the provisional agenda*
Follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development and the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly: priority theme: poverty eradication

Submitted by International Association of Schools of Social Work, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* E/CN.5/2011/1.

10-66350 (E) 281210

Please recycle

Statement*

Girls rights to education

1. Worldwide, 54 per cent of the 72 million children out of school are girls, proving the barriers of poverty prevent girls from consistently completing primary and secondary education. This statement is to encourage universal integration of the stipend programme to increase girls' participation and attendance in academia. By providing the family economic support to alleviate aspects of poverty that are directly correlated to girls' enrolment, there is potential for increased and elongated attendance. The net gains include, but are not limited to: increased attendance rates, increases in literacy and livelihood, elder age for marrying and maternity and decreases in infant mortality, HIV/AIDS, and generational poverty.

Poverty prohibits education

2. While education is a right, it is not addressed under any universal mandate. Several cultural practices remove girls from academia to work or to marry prior to completing secondary education because they have not shown potential to their guardians. Gender parity in the classroom would cut the number of girls out of school by over 6 million. In sub-Saharan Africa, almost 12 million girls do not have access to enrol in school, similar to Yemen, where nearly 80 per cent of girls are unlikely to enrol, compared with 36 per cent of boys. Turkey faces cultural barriers in addition to poverty that prevents 43 per cent of Kurdish-speaking girls from receiving more than two years of education. Likewise, 97 per cent of Hausa-speaking Nigerian girls from impoverished homes have less than two years' education.

3. Investing in girls is not frivolous as it is proven that educated women are more influential to the global community. Illiteracy is directly correlated to unemployment; two thirds of the 759 million adults that are illiterate are women. In 2000, 87 per cent of Afghani women were illiterate. In Chad, Ethiopia and Mali, women are 1.5 times more likely to be illiterate. In the Islamic Republic of Iran, unemployment rates among women aged 20 to 24 are twice the level of men in the same age group. Millions of women are not living to their fullest potential and cannot contribute their optimum amount to their community. Learning needs to start with children to improve the lives of adults, and it is our responsibility to provide the tools for success. Over 20 countries have implemented variations of a stipend programme. Best practices include:

- **Brazil** (*Bolsa Familia*). Established federally in 2003, financial aid is provided to families in poverty with children of age to attend primary or secondary education on the condition children have consistent attendance and are up to date on vaccines. Families earning less than 140 reais ($73) a month receive 22 reais ($12) per child. Families whose income is less than 70 reais receive 68 reais per month. Poverty has decreased 27.7 per cent since the programme's inception, benefiting more than 12 million families.[1]

* Issued without formal editing.

[1] G. Duffy "Family friendly: Brazil's scheme to tackle poverty", 25 May 2010, *BBC News*.

- **Mexico** (*Oportunidades*). Originally founded in 1997, the current programme was enforced in 2002 to provide a direct cash transfer directly to the matriarch with school aged children with consistent attendance to be used to supplement the cost of vaccines, and dietary needs. By 2006, the programme was responsible for aiding one quarter of Mexico's population.

- **Bangladesh**. Established in 1993, the Food for Education Program targeted the enrolment rate and consistent attendance by providing landless and very poor with a monthly allocation of wheat or rice. The primary education stipend programme introduced bank-mediated disbursement allocated to over 5.5 million students in the amount of 100 taka ($1.76) per month per pupil and 125 taka per month for more than one pupil.[2]

United Nations and the international position

4. Affirmation of the efforts is made by both international and local agencies. The World Bank is established as a supporter of the programme.[3] Over 20 countries have established a form of the stipend programme, whether by support of the government or non-governmental organizations and grass-roots agencies that are leading the way. The United Nations and participating State parties have nearly reached consensus to protect and work towards universal education as explicitly stated under article 28 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, paragraph 1, section (a): "Make primary education compulsory and available free to all." It is a priority for the United Nation to promote this programme since addressing a girl's right to primary and secondary education is directly correlated to all eight Millennium Development Goals.

Role in girl's futures

5. Implementing the stipend programme broadens access to education, which will create a greater pool of competent and effective leaders in society. The positive correlation between school attendance and employment implies that education should be geared towards equipping student with skills necessary for full development of personal potential. Decent work and supportive income are the best means for enabling families to move out of poverty. Girls are young women who will grow up to be mothers of children, and head corporations and countries; there is no profession left unturned by women. It is our right as adults, caretakers, educators, government officials, presidents, and friends to help girls develop to their full potential. Girls who are not counted, do not count; it is our duty to account for every girl. We urge a review of best practices and reports on the stipend programme. In doing so, we recommend:

- Providing a regular stipend, given directly to the matriarch of the family every month that her daughter(s) has perfect attendance — excluding natural disaster, illness, or emergency

- Maintaining a multidimensional approach to addressing poverty by also requiring children to be up-to-date on vaccines and receiving appropriate nutrition

[2] See http://siteresources.worldbank.org/EDUCATION/Resources/278200-1099079877269/547664-1099080014368/BangladeshStipend.pdf.

[3] See http://www.h.chiba-u.ac.jp/mkt/revised%20fssap%20paper9b.pdf.

- Ensuring that marginalized and excluded groups be a priority concern of government policy by recognizing the impact of social policy on those living in poverty
- Assessing and allocating an appropriate budget based on analysis of poverty specific to communities
- Being conscious of what it would realistically take to lift one family from poverty
- Looking at the value of education and compare it to the harmful effects of poverty and assess what can realistically be done to eradicate hardships and create success for young girls

Note: Statement also endorsed by Company of the Daughters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul, Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd, International Presentation Association of the Sisters of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur, non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Council.